Analysis of Cooperation Between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Member States in the Field of Non-traditional Security

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ABSTRACT

Since its establishment, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has insisted on cooperation in non-traditional security areas such as combating the "three forces", combating drug-related crimes, combating the COVID-19, protecting information security and non-proliferation, and has now established an institutionalized cooperation system. Based on reality, this article analyzes the significance and necessity of cooperation in non-traditional security fields from the perspectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization itself and member countries. Cooperation in non-traditional security fields requires countries to connect various key areas and links, deploy and coordinate actions in a unified manner, in order to ensure regional peace and security development, enhance international influence, and achieve mutual benefits between international organizations and member states.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Non-traditional security, New regional organizations

1. INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the world's first international organization named after a Chinese city, which has special significance for China. In its 20-year development process, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has adjusted its positioning in the complex international political and economic situation, making outstanding contributions to regional peace and security. In current world, with a trend towards multipolarity and an increasing number of security challenges and threats, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is constantly exploring and strengthening cooperation among member states in nontraditional security fields, advocating for a sense of community with a shared future for mankind, in order to gradually achieve development and prosperity in the surrounding areas of SCO member states.

2. COOPERATION TO COMBAT THE "THREE FORCES"

As early as the period of the "Shanghai Five Nations" mechanism, combating the "three forces"

had already been a very important issue. The Almaty Summit in 1998 explicitly proposed the fight against international terrorism. In June 2001, the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism" was signed, providing the first legal definition of the "three forces". In July 2005, the concept of cooperation in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism was signed.

The 9/11 incident further increased the attention of various countries to terrorism. Since the establishment of the regional counter-terrorism agency in Tashkent in 2004, member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have held joint counter-terrorism exercises under the codename "Peace Mission" in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2021. In addition, member countries have also achieved good results in joint border exercises.

Nowadays, cooperation in this area is gradually moving towards institutionalization. In 2017, the SCO Anti Extremism Convention was signed to improve counter-terrorism legislation; In 2018, the heads of state of the SCO member states signed a message to the youth, condemning the promotion of terrorism and emphasizing the ideological work of

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preventing young people from joining the "three forces"; In 2018, some member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization signed the Code of Conduct for a World Free from Terrorism; In March 2019, cooperation was reached and a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Nations regarding counter-terrorism agencies; In April 2019, the meeting of defense ministers of SCO members unanimously agreed to the United Nations Comprehensive Counterterrorism Convention; In 2021, "Cooperation Outline for Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism from 2022 to 2024" was signed¹; In 2022, the Samarkand Declaration was signed, which decided to establish separate anti-terrorism agencies in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Kyrgyzstan. The China Central Asia Emergency Management Cooperation Mechanism, announced in 2024, complements each other and further improves the mechanism for responding to threats. ² Overall, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has established a broad front to combat the "three forces".3

Afghanistan is one of the countries most severely affected by terrorism. 4 Considering that the country borders multiple SCO member states geographically, the SCO has always attached great importance to the issue of Afghanistan. Regarding the resolution of the Afghanistan issue, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization believes that political dialogue is the only way out and emphasizes the need to play the core coordinating role of the United Nations to promote an inclusive national reconciliation process led by and owned by the Afghan people. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has made various attempts to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In 2005, the SCO Afghanistan Liaison Group was established (resumed work in 2017). It is an important consultation mechanism for Afghanistan related issues. Since its establishment, it has held multiple meetings at the level of counselor, deputy foreign minister, and foreign minister, greatly promoting

cooperation between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Afghanistan. Since 2006, member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have participated in several ministerial level meetings on regional economic cooperation in Afghanistan. In 2012, Afghanistan became an observer state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In November 2018, the "Moscow Model" Afghanistan Consultation Meeting was held in Moscow, with a delegation from the Taliban Movement's Political Office and representatives from the Afghanistan High Peace Council attending the meeting in an attempt to discuss a solution.⁵ In April 2019, the meeting of the Liaison Group was successfully concluded, and the SCO and Afghanistan signed the "SCO Afghanistan Liaison Group's Next Action Roadmap", hoping to help Afghanistan build a country free from terrorism, war, and drugs. After the withdrawal of the US military from Afghanistan in 2021, the situation in Central Asia was turbulent, and countries began to seek a new balance. In September of the same year, President Xi Jinping proposed the "SCO + collective security" model, hoping that the two organizations would work together to help Afghanistan transition smoothly.

3. COOPERATION IN COMBATING DRUG CRIMES

The construction of regional drug control mechanisms and counter-terrorism mechanisms is mutually reinforcing, and a large part of the funds obtained from illegal drug trafficking ultimately flow towards terrorism. The Almaty Joint Statement of the Shanghai Five Nations clearly states that "all parties will take measures to combat... drug trafficking and narcotics, as well as other transnational criminal activities". In 2004, an agreement was signed on cooperation in combating illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors; In 2011, the Astana Summit approved the "2011-2016 Drug Control Strategy"; During the 2015 Ufa Summit, the heads of state of member countries issued a statement specifically on addressing the drug problem; On June 10, 2018, the Qingdao Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization approved the "2018-2023 Drug Control Strategy" 6; In 2020, member states and the United Nations jointly

^{1.} Bishkek Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-06/15/content_5400427.htm

^{2.} Samarkand Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-09/17/content_5710381.htm

^{3.} Rashid Alimov, translated by Wang Xianju et al. "The Creation, Development, and Prospects of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2018 edition, p61.

^{4.} Australian think tank Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), Global Terrorism Index Report 2023 (GTI 2023).

^{5.} Russia News Agency, on November 12, 2018, https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKeNu2

^{6.} CCTV Qingdao, June 11, 2018, http://china.cnr.cn/news/20180611/t20180611_524265166.shtml

organized a high-level joint event on "The United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to Counter the Threat of Illegal Drug Traffic: Combating Drug Trafficking through the Dark Web" to support the "Paris Process" initiative through practical actions.

For many years, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has carried out drug control work such as "rat traps" and "spider webs" through forms such as intelligence sharing, joint operations, and strengthening cooperation with other international organizations, with significant results. From 2011 to the first half of 2016, a total of 69 tons of heroin, over 17 tons of opium seeds, over 349 tons of cannabis, and Indian cannabidiol were confiscated from the territories of SCO member countries. 8

4. COOPERATION IN OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY FIELDS

The cooperation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in other non-traditional security fields is also very close, briefly classified as follows.

4.1 Cooperation in Fighting the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 has spread globally. Shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization expressed support on the official website of the rotating chairman.9 In November 2020, SCO issued the Statement of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO Member States on Jointly Responding to the COVID-19, saying that it would "take resolute, coordinated and inclusive actions to jointly combat the pandemic". In June 2021, the Meeting of Health Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states was held in Dushanbe in the form of a video conference to discuss the current situation of the epidemic in SCO member states and the measures taken by each country to curb the spread of the epidemic. It was proposed to expand scientific and technological cooperation in the

sharing of diagnosis and treatment experience, research and development of drugs, vaccines, and testing systems. The Secretary General stated that large-scale measures have been taken within the SCO space to help each other. In addition to crossborder aid, member countries also organize storytelling events for international students and overseas organizations to showcase the friendship of "watching and helping each other, overcoming difficulties together" to the world. After the end of the epidemic, SCO member states continued to engage in other cooperation in the field of healthcare, such as the traditional medicine forum held in 2023 and the establishment of the China SCO Emergency Medical Cooperation Center in 2024.

4.2 Cooperation in Information Security

Cooperation Organization Shanghai emphasizes network sovereignty, opposes practices that hinder the development of the digital economy communication technology, militarization in the field of information and communication technology, and strives to establish a system under the leadership of the United Nations to monitor and respond to potential threats in global information space, and formulate international conventions in related fields. In 2009, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Safeguarding International Information Security was signed at the Yekaterinburg Summit, which clearly stated that "information security is an important component of the international security system". In 2015 and 2017, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization conducted cyber counter-terrorism exercises to strengthen law enforcement cooperation in the field of cyber counter-terrorism. In 2020, the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization issued a statement on safeguarding cooperation in the field of international information security, promoting multilateral cooperation to prevent the use of information and communication technology for "three forces" and other criminal purposes. 10 The 2022-2023 Cooperation Plan to Ensure International Information Security was signed in 2022, ensuring information security within the SCO framework with a pragmatic attitude.

^{7.} Moscow Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-11/11/content_5560420.htm

^{8.} Chen Xiaoding, The Options for SCO Deepening the Security Cooperation After Its Expansion: A Perspective Based on the Supply and Demand Relationship of Regional Public Goods, World Economics and Politics, 2019(3), p114.

^{9.} Regular press conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 14, 2020. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-02/14/content_5478933.htm

^{10.} Statement of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Safeguarding Cooperation in the Field of International Information Security. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-11/11/content_5560424.htm

4.3 Cooperation in Non-proliferation Field

Faced with the challenge of the nuclear nonproliferation system, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization mainly adopts political and diplomatic means to respond. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization believes that "individual countries or groups of countries unilaterally strengthening antimissile systems without considering the interests of other countries will endanger international security and world stability"; At the same time, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization firmly opposes the practice of "safeguarding its own security at the cost of harming the security of other countries". 11 Many member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have signed the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, committed to consolidating the global nuclear non-proliferation system. In 2014, five nuclear weapon states including China, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France, as well as five signatory countries including Kazakhstan, signed the Protocol to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty at the United Nations headquarters. 12 After the entry into force of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated at a regular press conference on January 25, 2021 that the process of nuclear disarmament will be promoted on the basis of comprehensive consideration of international security realities. After the United States withdrew from the Comprehensive Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program, China is still actively mediating with all parties to discuss the next steps of implementing the agreement, and will hold its first foreign ministers' meeting in 2024, including all signatories of the agreement (except for the United States). In 2023, Iran officially joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, becoming the first Middle Eastern country of the organization, further enhancing the international influence of the organization. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization will continue to play a platform regulatory role in helping Central Asia and the peaceful Middle East achieve and steady development. In addition, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is also concerned

11. Qingdao Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. http://www.mod.gov.cn/2018qdfh/2018-06/11/content_4816619.htm

about preventing an arms race in outer space. After the video conference of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO member states in 2020, a declaration was adopted, expressing support for preventing the weaponization of outer space and hoping that all countries will use outer space for peaceful purposes. ¹³

5. THE NECESSITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF COOPERATION IN NONTRADITIONAL FIELD SECURITY

5.1 The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Itself

With the rapid development of globalization in today's world, if the Shanghai Cooperation Organization wants to maintain and expand its global influence, it must have greater achievements in larger regions. Previously, the work center of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was largely focused on security. Although the status of economic cooperation has now been elevated, this does not mean that security is no longer a priority. Compared to promoting economic cooperation, mediating conflicts may be a more effective way to enhance the status of regional organizations. 14 Instead of traditional security, it happens to be an emerging field that allows regional organizations to play a mediating role.

Non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking cannot be completely defeated, and they will grow again and again; The spread of the pandemic is even more complex, requiring coordination and management among multiple countries for the entry and exit, disinfection, and testing of citizens and goods. The resolution of all non-traditional security issues requires the participation and collaboration of regional and global organizations. This reflects the regional and international characteristics of such problems, and national borders cannot play a role in dividing them. This means that: (1) neighboring countries within the same region must work together to establish normative definitions and systems, such as conventions, declarations, and other legal documents, to minimize the space for

^{12.} Xinhua News Agency, United Nations, May 6, 2014, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-05/07/content_2673468.htm

^{13.} Daily Finance quoted Sputniknews, a Russian satellite news agency, http://cn.dailyeconomic.com/finance/2020/11/11/15524.html

^{14.} Li Liang, On the Conflict Mediation Mechanism among the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russian Studies, 2020(3), p25.

illegal organizations to flee; (2) It is best to establish a unified monitoring system, detect and solve problems as early as possible, and nip crises in the bud (because once illegal organizations develop and grow, more manpower and material resources need to be invested in tracking and investigating, and a longer front line may provide opportunities for exploitation); (3) The containment of violence is not fundamental, but more importantly, it involves education, propaganda, and economic development, providing people of all countries with a better living environment, improving national quality, and making peace a deeply ingrained theme. Therefore, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is committed to fully leveraging the role of communication links to help and promote in-depth cooperation among member states and neighboring countries in non-traditional security fields.

Resolving non-traditional security requires intervention of the international organizations, regional organizations, or third countries, providing communication platforms. This also means that external forces will have the opportunity to affect regional security: it may be unintentional, or it may intentionally create difficulties in solving specific problems through various means, or even pose a threat to peace and security in a certain region, such as inciting color revolutions, armed conflicts, inciting terrorism to flow to designated areas, and so on. For example, the Islamic rebellion in Tajikistan from 2010 to 2012, the chaos of the 2020 presidential election in Belarus, the January 2022 riots in the capital of Kazakhstan, the large-scale demonstrations and protests in the Karakalpak Republic of Uzbekistan in July 2022¹⁵, the 2023 Kyrgyzstan coup crisis, the 2024 Moscow terrorist attack, and the longstanding border dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia are all closely related to the development of geopolitics and great power politics. The most typical example is Tajikistan, which is plagued by terrorism. In the early days of the country's establishment, the Islamic Renaissance Party established itself and became a significant political force that should not be underestimated. Subsequently, an important member of the party, former commander of Tajikistan's special police force, Khalimov, announced his membership in the extremist organization IS in 2015 and is currently wanted globally. Experts and analysts point out that

15. Rongjie, Pengpai News, July 2022, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_18967560

the significant shift in Halimov's thinking is likely due to religious discrimination he suffered during his training in the United States. ¹⁶ An aid program aimed at cultivating counter-terrorism personnel but producing a real terrorist is undoubtedly a failure case of non-traditional security cooperation. This warning requires everyone, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and any third party to be cautious when engaging in non-traditional security cooperation, fully considering the national conditions of both sides, formulating meticulous plans, and ensuring that everything is foolproof.

In addition, the planning and mobilization of the above disturbances are mainly achieved through social media, with young and middle-aged participants as the main participants. This reflects that ensuring information network security, improving youth quality education, and combating the "three forces" are interconnected. Furthermore, it is necessary to achieve cooperation in nontraditional security areas as a whole, connect various key areas and links, strengthen the comprehensive management of social organizations and non-governmental organizations by countries, enhance information communication and exchange among countries, in order to truly achieve coordinated development within the regional framework.

5.2 Security and Development of Various Countries

Security is the core interest of every country, and the constant conflicts within the region clearly do not meet the strategic needs of any country. From the perspective of overall national security, the connotation and extension of "national security" include political security, economic security, military, cultural, social security, international security, and other aspects.

Firstly, it is evident that cooperation in non-traditional security fields directly safeguards political security. The various political turmoil listed earlier can be alleviated to varying degrees through such cooperation.

Secondly, in order to ensure economic security, it is necessary to address non-traditional security issues such as the "three forces", drug trade, and information security risks, in order to create a peaceful and stable external environment for

^{16.} People's Daily Online, June 2015, http://paper.people.com.cn/hqrw/html/2015-06/16/content_1662567.htm

economic development. China actively is promoting "the Belt and Road Initiative", and Central Asian countries also hope to participate. 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of "the Belt and Road Initiative" put forward by President Xi Jinping, the first China-Central Asia Summit was held, and the "List of Results of the China-Central Asia Summit" was officially released, detailing 82 cooperation consensuses and important achievements reached between China and the five Central Asian countries: the construction of natural gas pipelines in cooperation with Kazakhstan, the development of gold mines in Otongk in cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, the construction of Kamchik tunnel and the construction of electrified railway trunk lines in Angren Pap in cooperation with Uzbekistan, the cultivation of agricultural and sideline products in cooperation with Tajikistan, China Europe trains, and so on. It can be imagined that when economic cooperation is in full swing, if an attack planned by extremist or terrorist organizations suddenly occurs, it will cause serious economic losses to all parties involved. Therefore, member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization hope to cooperate in combating the activities of the "three forces" on the Eurasian continent, and continue to expand and deepen cooperation in non-traditional security fields.

From another perspective, strengthening the cooperation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in non-traditional security fields can also correspondingly enhance the international influence of member states. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an international with "de-Americanized" characteristics, which is rare in today's multipolar trend of "one superpower, multiple strengths". With the help of multilateral institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS countries, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the CICA Summit, and APEC, Asia Pacific countries represented by China are establishing alternative multilateral groups to respond to the United States' attempts to return to Asia economically and militarily. 17 This is also in line with the trend of deepening multipolarity in the Simply put, countries world today. international organizations are enhancing their influence within a certain region through various

17. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Russian Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, Shanghai Cooperation Organization Research Network. http://studysco.euroasia.cssn.cn/shzl/aqfw/201409/t20140903_1 316019.html

means. If the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can play an increasingly important role in non-traditional security areas and resolve regional issues peacefully, not only the SCO itself, but also its member countries will have an increasingly important position internationally. At the same time, this also helps to enhance mutual trust among member countries, further promote cooperation, and form a virtuous cycle.

6. CONCLUSION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has become one of the most influential international organizations. 18 Various member states have conducted extensive cooperation in non-traditional security fields, making positive contributions to the development region. further of the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization still faces many difficulties and challenges, but it should be noted that it has made a successful practice in building a community with a shared future for mankind, which is of profound significance for the development of new regional organizations.

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^{18.} Xinhua News Agency, June 25, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2021-06/25/c_1127599586.htm

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